

Much in Burma has changed since Kipling, but one phenomenon survives: the dawn still "comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay." That's why the government of U Nu is so cautious in edging away from neutralism and leaning towards the West.

Not long ago the edging was the other way. In 1955, Mr. Nu was ~~ited~~ in Peking. Chinese Premier Chou En-lai was repeatedly welcomed in Rangoon. A year-and-a-half ago, Bulganin and Khrushchev -- fresh from propagandist conquests in India -- gathered laurels in Burma. U Nu returned from a tour of the Soviet Union, impressed by the transformation, in little more than a generation, of primitive, agrarian Russia into the world's second industrial power.

An incident in December, 1955, symbolized the West's alarm as Burma seemed to be gravitating toward the Moscow-Peking axis. A World Bank mission in Burma was abruptly ordered back aft U Nu had accepted Soviet agricultural advisers.

However, tension between Burma and the West was brief. Last year the World Bank, in a forgiving mood, granted U Nu two loans totalling about \$30,000,000. One loan was to enlarge the port of Rangoon, Burma's capital, and the other to modernize Burmese railroads. A couple of months ago, the United States extended a \$25,000,000 credit for Burma's economic development.

Now Burma is on the verge of requesting more substantial American aid. It will be for \$90,000,000 worth of U.S. agricultural surpluses to be delivered over three years, starting July 1. Two-thirds of this amount is wanted for raw cotton to expand textile manufacture; the rest would supply American vegetable oils, tobacco, dairy products, wheat and flour. It would all be repayable in Burmese currency, thus safeguarding the nation's difficult foreign exchange position.

Such assistance in itself would not compromise Burmese neutralism. After all, the United States is giving similar aid to other unaligned countries like India, Indonesia and Yugoslavia -- and now, even to Communist Poland. However, there are indications of quite another character. About a year ago, the commander-in-chief of Burma's armed forces, General Ne Win, came to Washington. Without publicity, U. S. military chiefs entertained him and engaged in conversations about which nothing became known. Last winter Lieutenant General Graves Erskine of the Marine Corps visited Burma. Nominally retired, the general is an active consultant of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The reciprocal mission of Ne Win and Erskine and efforts by the American military attache in Rangoon, Colonel Edward Thelan, are bearing fruit. The United States has offered to supply machine-guns and rifles to the Burmese army to support its continuing war against Communist guerrillas. Burma has suggested that a few U.S. officers be assigned to help train Burmese non-coms and staff officers. However, Burma has stipulated that the officers should be under individual contract to the Burmese Defense Ministry and not under U.S. command. Thus U Nu hopes to avoid the appearance of departing from neutrality -- an acknowledgment of the "thunder outer China 'crost the Bay."

But both American and Burmese authorities regard the proposed military collaboration as just a start.

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